

# Into the Mainstream

## Promoting Coastal Resource Management on the Philippine National Agenda

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**T**he Coastal Resource Management Project (CRMP) is a 7-year (1996-2002) technical assistance project being implemented by the Philippines' Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project's strategic objective is to achieve, by the year 2002, a threshold of sustainable coastal resource management (CRM) over 3,000 km of the Philippines' more than 18,000 km of coastline.

To help achieve this objective, an integrated Information, Education, Communication (IEC) program is being implemented to develop broad support for CRM at both the national and local levels, and thus promote a strategic spread of CRM.



Philippine President Joseph Ejercito-Estrada and US Ambassador to the Philippines Hubbard show off their "I Love the Ocean" wristbands

## The Great Leap Forward

On May 26-28, 1999, 701 mayors representing 90% of coastal municipalities in the Philippines converged in Manila for a historic meeting with the country's top government officials, including the Philippine President himself. The occasion was the first Conference of Coastal Municipalities of the Philippines. This environmental forum, the first of its kind in Asia and only the second in the world after a similar conference held in 1998 in Canada, was unprecedented in

terms of mayors' attendance, cabinet-level interest and participation, mass media coverage and intensity of discussions.

Four cabinet secretaries, a presidential adviser, and a presidential assistant spelled out their respective departments' agenda in empowering local government units (LGUs) for integrated coastal management. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court challenged the mayors to exercise political will in protecting and conserving the country's marine and coastal resources. And the President delivered a historic "State of the Ocean" address, challenging LGUs to maintain coastal management as one of their basic services and "lead in the sustainable management of municipal waters."

For their part, the mayors drew up a 15-point set of resolutions requiring executive and legislative actions that would enable LGUs to effectively manage their municipal waters. They also committed to undertake "doable" CRM best practices in their respective municipalities.

The Conference is clearly a milestone in CRMP's two-year partnership with the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP), a quasi-government body made up of the mayors of the Philippines' 1,527 municipalities (of which 832 are classified as coastal). At one broad stroke, it brought to the collegial attention of the country's highest leaders the Project's call for government to promote CRM as a basic service to coastal communities.

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**A direct result of the Conference was a series of Presidential directives that put into motion the formulation of a national coastal and marine policy framework; the creation of an inter-agency task force on coastal zone management; the fast tracking of the delineation of municipal waters as provided for in the country's Fisheries Code of 1998; and a closer study to increase national funding for CRM by amending the Local Government Code to include municipal waters in the computation of LGUs' share in the legally mandated Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA).**

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## What We Were Up Against

Like many other countries endowed with rich marine habitats and coastal waters, the Philippines has historically pursued coastal and marine development along the premise that fisheries production can be increased through the use of more efficient gear and technology; that we can continue to operate within the open access regime; that marine and coastal issues/problems are primarily the problems of fishers and coastal communities; and that we can take as much as we want, no holds barred, from the sea.

It is now widely acknowledged that this framework of development has led to excessive fishing pressure, overfishing, stock depletion, and the destruction of freshwater and marine habitats.

It has only been in the last decade or so that, internationally, the critical issues of overfishing and habitat destruction are being communicated with some degree of urgency by research institutions, the academe and donor agencies (Williams, 1994). As elsewhere in the world, fisheries production in the Philippines is steadily declining despite nearly two decades of fishery resource management projects and development initiatives.

For a country that is made up more than 7,100 islands and heavily dependent on marine and coastal resources for food and livelihood, linking marine habitat protection with food security should come as a matter of course. In fact, however, CRM issues have traditionally not figured prominently at the national policy level or been regarded with as much urgency as land-oriented problems. When allocating resources, whether in terms of funding or personnel deployment, the government has been biased towards increased agricultural production, with food security programs rarely factoring fishery and aquatic resources into the equation (Courtney, et al). Where fisheries are concerned, the response of the government has largely been to promote increased efficiency in fishing effort rather than to introduce or enhance management measures. Generally, interventions and solutions have not been comprehensive enough to cover the issues of poverty, food security, sustainability and ecological soundness.

A study conducted two years ago showed that, although the destruction of Philippine ecosystems was very pervasive, public awareness of what was happening to the country's marine and coastal resources was low (Social Weather Stations, 1997). Marine and coastal issues were not a priority of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources



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**Mangrove resources have diminished from 450,000 hectares at the beginning of the century to about 150,000 hectares today as a result of extensive fishpond development. Other coastal resources also are severely degraded throughout the country. Of the estimated 27,000 square kilometers of coral reef habitat in the Philippines, less than 5% is considered in excellent condition and over 70% in poor to fair condition. When viewed in the context of the country's ability to produce food for its people, such numbers are nothing short of ominous. (Courtney, et al, 1999)**

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(DENR), whose primary focus and capabilities were forestry-based. Furthermore, advocacy activities for marine and coastal issues were confined to fisherfolk groups and a few conservation-oriented non-governmental organizations. Outside these sectors, there was relatively little sympathy, much less empathy, for marine and coastal problems from the bigger spheres of influence in the country.

The Local Government Code of 1991 has provided the initial policy structures to decentralize the management of coastal waters in the Philippines. This is generally seen as a step forward for local governance in the country and, in particular, for coastal management. Nevertheless, the devolution of responsibility to LGUs has added a new dimension to the coastal issue. Experiences from past CRM projects have shown that LGUs are largely unaware of their roles in managing municipal waters, as much as they are uninformed about the roles of government institutions that have been tasked to assist them. In stark contrast to the fisherfolk, LGUs have been detached from CRM-related problems, preoccupied as they are with infrastructure, health, sanitation and economic problems (GreenCom Philippines, 1996). Indeed, compared to such devolved functions as health and agricultural services, natural resource management in general has received low LGU prioritization in the Philippines. (GreenCom Philippines, 1996).



Given all this, it is not surprising that the country's coastal and marine environment has suffered a steep decline in just the last three decades. Time is running out – fast. CRMP recognized at the outset that it will take a strategic

spread of sustainable resource management within the Philippine coastal zone to prevent a general collapse of marine resources due to increased population pressure and the rapidly rising demand for marine-based protein. In the Project's view, any effective response must first begin with a slowing down of the decline, followed by stabilization and regeneration of the complex ecological systems involved (USAID, 1995). It is a race against time, and a race that must be won.

## The Need for a Critical Mass

The awareness of the serious degradation of coastal and marine resources worldwide is fairly new, but it is growing. An increasing number of countries are beginning to discard long-held beliefs about the nature of the coastal problem, shifting the focus of government and other programs away from fisheries development to coastal management. Recognizing that management is most effective when brought close to the resources used, some countries, including the Philippines, have started to devolve the responsibility for managing coastal resources to the lowest level of government. This is where we find some of the biggest challenges and opportunities to translate the new paradigms in coastal management to the successful recovery of Philippine seas.

Over the past 3-½ years, CRMP's journey to promote CRM in the Philippines has been one of evolution, adaptation and opportunism. A major objective of CRMP's IEC program has been to debunk the myths about coastal and marine development through strategic and research-based information presented in various mass, group and special media and in messages accessible and acceptable to a broad spectrum of audiences.

For CRM to get anywhere as a sustainable development strategy, marine and coastal issues must first be perceived as priority problems needing action by both national and local government and the bigger sectors of society. As noted by political scientists, the identification of a *condition*, such as deteriorating coastal resources, is not the same as the definition of a *problem* that requires attention and response (Tobin, 1992). "Conditions become defined as problems when we come to believe that we should do something about them" (Tobin, quoting Kingdon, 1992).

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**While, indeed, the Philippines has been a pioneer in the development and practice of community-based CRM, such pioneering efforts have not been taken to scale. Time-bound, location-specific CRM projects were successfully implemented in certain areas, but given the country's more than 18,000 km coastline, these successes were not sufficient to achieve a threshold for national implementation. It is also observed that there has been no comprehensive documentation of experiences and "lessons learned" from past projects. As such, an important source of information to improve on new community-based CRM initiatives has been left untapped. (ICLARM, 1995).**

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Given the centralized nature of decision-making in Philippine politics, no amount of community-based CRM programs will reach the threshold of sustainability without the convergence of national policies and local initiatives. In 1997, as CRMP stepped up its efforts to achieve its strategic objective – that is, a threshold of sustainable CRM over 3,000 km of the Philippines' more than 18,000 km of coastline – it seemed evident that the initial task at hand was to move coastal issues into the forefront of the country's political landscape and public milieu, and to transform perception of these issues from "local, sectoral and productivity" issues to "national, general public and environmental problems".

Clearly, ownership of coastal issues must expand beyond sectoral confines to a much broader and "noisier" political base. And, given that LGUs now have the mandate to sustainably manage coastal resources, the Project also recognizes the need to repeatedly affirm this mandate.

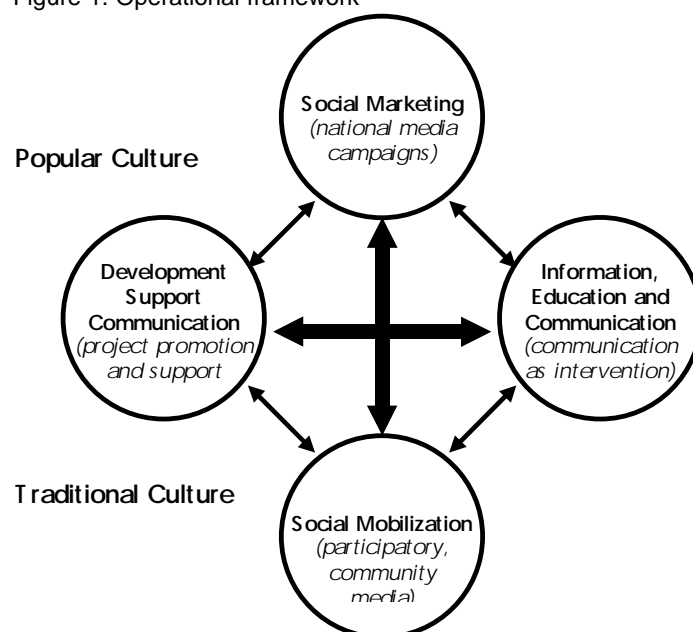
## Evolution of an IEC Framework

The need for the adoption of CRM at both the national and local levels prompted CRMP to formulate an IEC framework that would take into account the complexities of environmental programs. Early in the Project, some difficulty was encountered in the identification of specific sets of

intermediary environmental behaviors that would lead to CRM adoption. There were just too many behaviors and too many crosscutting sectors to deal with. And so, while behavioral change remains the ultimate goal, the Project has adopted a framework (dubbed as the "transformational communication" process) that is normative and "agenda-setting" in its approach.

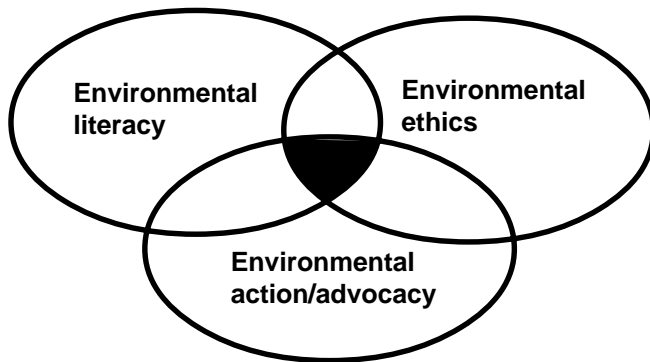
The framework integrates the major communication approaches to development undertakings (social marketing, community mobilization, institutionalization and advocacy) and promotes institutional (network) development and capacity building (Figure 1). It recognizes the role of leadership and the critical mass and incorporates the elements of literacy, ethics, action and advocacy as central to sustained social change (Figure 2). It aims not just for behavioral targets but for the initiation of social processes as well. Such processes in turn would have their own momentum, thereby triggering large-scale social transformation. The paradigm thus moves away from the more conventional IEC linear approaches to one that is more systems thinking. It calls for approaches to be synergy-driven, multi-level, inclusive, and strategic, identifying pressure points or nodes within these social processes that would lead to the greatest impact at the shortest possible time. (Flor & Smith, 1998)

Figure 1. Operational framework



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Figure 2. Substantive framework



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The framework is founded on the principle that a shared belief and value system forms a horizon in people's lives and that a sense of direction, prioritization and shared responsibility with regard to the environment needs to be inculcated in people's collective consciousness. In light of current pragmatic realities and conflicting interests, such horizon of "ought to be's" and "ought to do's" need to be defined, affirmed and legitimized.

It has been observed through the study of religious movements that the content of education (what is taught) is not primary in creating a sense of nationhood in a people. What matters most instead is that the members of the group share the same beliefs. It is their belief system that brings people together, not the other way around. In other words, a community is created only when a belief system is attained and shared. Individual values formation therefore (or the desired behavioral change) must be related to the bigger social objectives, the lack of which is the cause of continuing social problems (Felipe, 1989).

The paradigm described above is based on the following considerations:

**1) Too many players and stakeholders.** CRM is a complex strategy involving not only many sectors of society but also various types of resources that need to be conserved and/or utilized in a sustainable fashion (Lowry, in T.E. Chua and Pauly, 1989). It practically means, "trying to influence the behavior of groups and individuals whose activities contribute to the problem. [These groups and individuals] include large-scale hotel builders, industrialists, miners, aquaculture operators, as well as the thousands of villagers who clear mangroves to make charcoal or create farmland,

the fishermen who over-fish and others whose small, individual actions can have large, cumulative impacts. In most countries, the personnel in other agencies are among those whose behavior must be modified if coastal problems are to be mitigated or development objectives are to be achieved." (Lowry, in T.E. Chua and Pauly, 1989)

**2) Lack of immediate benefits.** The benefits offered by CRM are long-term benefits. Unlike health, population and agricultural programs, environmental programs can offer no immediate benefit in exchange for dropping environmentally unfriendly behaviors. Between earning a living and environmental considerations, the former would have more takers than the latter, anytime. Moreover, health, population and agricultural benefits are much easier to equate with behavioral change in a person than environmental benefits. A change in one person's behavior, by itself, can improve at least that person's health, or his or her income, or his or her family's well-being, but it is unlikely to have any significant impact on the environment.

**3) Negative rewards from behavioral change.** Although changing fisherfolks' behaviors – such as stopping the use of dynamite or cyanide in fishing – is in everyone's best interest in the very long term, it often has instant negative rewards for the fishers (fishing puts food on the table and money in the pocket). It is not a coincidence that the population sectors with the highest poverty are at the two ends of the watershed: the forest folk and the coastal folk, both highly resource-dependent populations with very little alternatives in the form of secure employment. It is possible to make minor modifications in individual behaviors. For example, persuading fishers to change the size of their nets, to fish seasonally, to keep only fish of a particular size or to limit fishing to a well-defined area to allow other habitats to restore themselves may rely on voluntary changes in behavior. The "bigger" behavioral changes, however, such as stopping dynamite and/or cyanide fishing, are largely involuntary, triggered by regulatory and enforcement measures.

**4) Need for regulation and law enforcement.** Regulatory and enforcement activities can mandate involuntary behavioral change and, in the short run, may be the most effective way to proceed. When consistently done, it can effect large-scale involuntary behavioral change to turn around the resource. There are social and financial costs to enforcement, however, and sustainability is a problem.

**5) Complexity of environmental programs.** With its



array of biological, geophysical, institutional and socio-economic concerns, environmental programs possess a higher order of complexity than agricultural, population and health programs. Environmental programs therefore require a set of higher-order IEC interventions than traditionally practiced.

**6) Too many behaviors to deal with.** The behavioral approach works well in health, population and agricultural programs, but it falls short of expectations when applied to the environment, where one must contend with many related behaviors and crosscutting sectors. Applying specific IEC interventions for each behavior may not be realistic and focusing on a given few might be fragmented and ineffective from a holistic perspective.

**7) Need for community involvement.** In the context of the environment, individuals and groups are not autonomous enough to undertake “action” when many limitations and constraints circumscribe them. Tenurial disputes, policy conflicts among and between national agencies and local government, as well as “political squabbles”, are real issues that impinge on the “decision-making” and environmental activism of communities.

**8) Political and social dimension of environmental problems.** In the Philippine context, focusing on behavior as an IEC strategy may detract from the structural and systemic weaknesses that largely contribute to the state of Philippine natural resources. Environmental issues are not just “individual” issues involving individual behavioral change, but collective and political problems requiring collective initiatives and political solutions. For example, the issue of dynamite fishing is best understood not just in behavioral terms but also in the context of the social and political situations in which people live.

**9) Need for a pragmatic approach.** It may be more pragmatic to focus on “agenda setting” and a more normative approach to the environment. Such an approach may be akin to a religious movement wherein the elements of literacy, ethics, action and advocacy are key to the movement’s adoption and sustainability. These elements reinforce one another and would lead to sustained and consistent changes in social norms and consequently in behavior.

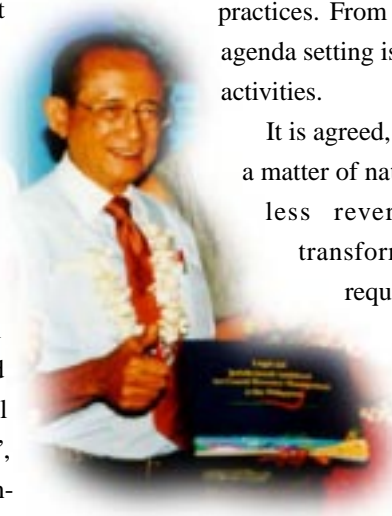
## Agenda Setting and Mainstreaming as a CRM Strategy

Agenda setting (which has been traditionally ascribed as a mass media function) is the process by which problems become salient as political issues meriting the attention of the larger public (Cook et al, 1983, quoted by Wallack, 1992). Its primary objective is to focus the spotlight on a particular issue and extend the attention given to its illumination (Wallack, 1992). It is a key strategy for CRM, which is not only a new issue but also challenges the status quo of Philippine fisheries development policies and practices. From a policy perspective, it may be said that agenda setting is one of the most important aspects of IEC activities.

It is agreed, of course, that simply mandating CRM as a matter of national policy is not enough to arrest, much less reverse, environmental degradation. A transformation among all sectors of society is required, and it demands a good understanding of the intended change, the exercise of political will, and strong leadership. Such transformation requires a lot of time. (Ferrer, in T.E.Chua and Pauly, 1988)

The concept of mainstreaming CRM in the Philippine national agenda was born out of the desire to help “jumpstart” the process of transformation. CRM as a sustainable development strategy ranks low in the priorities of national and local governments, so effort must be undertaken to move it quickly into the national and local agenda. Viewed from this angle, agenda setting must be the first phase of the “transformational communication” process.

For CRMP, agenda setting is being achieved at two levels: national and local. At the local level, agenda setting is being effected through community-based approaches, particularly the Participatory Coastal Resource Assessment (PCRA), which provides “conscientization” opportunities for coastal communities to prioritize marine and coastal issues as problems. With the community’s direct participation and actual involvement in the gathering and sharing of data regarding their resources, a prioritization process happens, and the values of personal stewardship and collective responsibility are internalized. Through PCRA and the subsequent processes involved in the formulation of CRM plans, the community reaches a common vision or



“horizon”. The process thus defines clearly not so much the specific behavioral changes but the critical result areas needed to be considered by the community to achieve the sustainable resource use of their resources.



**Where community mobilization and participatory approaches are operative at the local level, social marketing techniques dominate the strategy at the national level.**

At the start of Project implementation, national level awareness lagged behind local level awareness, so an immediate IEC objective was to “create a buzz” around marine and coastal issues and engage the general public to help transform perception of these issues into urgent problems requiring national attention and solutions. Given this, CRMP’s agenda-setting strategy at the national level included the following:

- Ö extensive use of mass media
- Ö conduct of special events and promotional activities
- Ö partnerships with strategic institutions/ organizations to serve as “multipliers” and “pressure points” for CRM
- Ö inclusion of the general public as a base of support for CRM initiatives.

For maximum impact and media framing, IEC activities were timed to coincide with international, national or local events such as the International Year of the Ocean in 1998, International Coastal Cleanup, Month of Ocean, World Food Day, Fisheries Week, etc. These activities were optimized for their media-drawing potential and public participation values. Efforts were made, however, to converge national with local level activities to allow the interaction of national leaders with local leaders and national media with local experiences. A rule of the thumb was the aggressive solicitation of mass media coverage and business sector support. While partnerships were strategic, emphasis was also placed on the inclusive nature of IEC activities where anyone and everyone who wanted to be involved were encouraged and accepted.

The following approaches also worked well in helping promote CRM in the Philippine national agenda:

**1) Finding an “authentic voice” and advocate for CRM.** The devolution of the responsibility to manage coastal waters to the municipalities may be viewed as both a threat and an opportunity for CRM. Even with limited resources, an activist LGU can deliver CRM as a basic service of the municipality, while an indifferent LGU will not. As has been astutely observed, “while it is true that poverty pervades much of the world, it is a rare government that is not able to find money for its preferred projects. Political will usually produces political capital, which readily converts to resources.” (Tobin, 1992)

An indicator of LGU prioritization of CRM would be the annual budgets municipalities allocate for CRM activities. In a survey conducted by CRMP and LMP in May 1999, a considerable increase both in the number of LGUs and the amounts of budget allocated was reported as illustrated in the following:

Year	Total No. of LGU Respondents	Average CRM Budget	% of LGUs Allocating Budget for CRM
1996	3	83,836.73	1.20%
1997	95	139,123.08	38.55%
1998	114	168,366.08	46.18%
1999	135	182,312.01	54.62%

CRMP’s strategic partnership with the LMP started the process for the prioritization of CRM in the mayors’ local agenda. The first Conference of Coastal Municipalities of the Philippines, which was attended by 90% of coastal mayors and the top leaders of the country, affirmed this prioritization through the 15-point set of resolutions that the mayors formulated as a collegial body. Such prioritization was then “legitimized” with the President’s acceptance of the mayors’ resolutions and the Presidential directives that followed. Despite what skeptics may say, such so-called “rituals” and manifestations of commitment during the Conference served as critical perception points that helped push CRM issues into the sphere of the Philippines’ national agenda setting. This was a classic demonstration of the transformational communication framework in action, where a “set of beliefs” was shared, affirmed and finally legitimized.

The role of LMP goes an extra step further in that, as






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LMP President Jinggoy Estrada (second from right) with (from left) US Ambassador Hubbard, President Estrada, and Interior and Local Government Secretary Ronaldo Puno at the Conference of Coastal Municipalities of the Philippines

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an organization, LMP serves as a “pressure point” among peers as well as for the national government. One venue where such peer pressure can happen is the “Search for Best CRM Program Awards,” a nationwide search, which CRMP helped organize. The Search seeks to recognize outstanding efforts of LGUs in initiating and implementing CRM in their municipalities.

To make CRM more effective at the local level, a number of jurisdictional issues must be resolved. The more important issues relate to the reluctance of national agencies to fully devolve CRM-related functions to the LGUs. Nevertheless, with the mayors themselves serving as the advocates of their mandated interests, there is a greater chance for a convergence of national policy and local initiatives to happen. And, with LMP adopting the CRM agenda at its own, an “authentic” voice for advocating local governance in CRM has been found.

The road has been opened for the strategic spread of CRM. We must now face up to the challenge of effecting the adequate delivery of technical and institutional support to help the LGUs fulfil their mandates.

**2) Use of mass media for agenda setting.** Mass media is a primary ally in the agenda-setting process of a public issue. This has been proven once again in CRMP’s case, where the ventilation of marine and coastal issues/problems in the national and local media contributed significantly to the promotion of CRM in the national agenda.

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**Through the agenda-setting process, the mass media can provide the first step to public awareness and change, or by withholding attention, they can leave issues in the dark reaches of public consciousness. (Wallack, 1993).**

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IEC activities were planned for their media and public participation values. The highly successful “Our Seas, Our Life” traveling exhibit, for example, was valuable not just for itself but also for its media drawing power. During its provincial tour, the exhibit provided opportunities for the convergence of national and local press conferences, and for media invitational visits to CRMP learning sites. Such events served as take-off points for a proactive media program involving TV and radio show appearances and print media interviews. Radio-TV plugs – some jointly produced by CRMP and major broadcasting networks, others initiated by the media outfits themselves – were aired for the duration of these special events.

Media coverage was not limited to the environmental or agricultural pages of newspapers. To allow for more in-depth treatments of stories, CRMP targeted the lifestyle/tourism sections of the country’s major dailies. Media invitational tours to CRMP learning sites provided good material for such articles. In addition, CRMP was a most

willing resource center for media inquiries and facilitation of media visits to other CRM sites. The project's website, <http://www.oneocean.org>, also served – and continues to serve – as a good source of media material for CRM stories.

High-rating public affairs shows patronized by policy-makers and decision-makers were targeted for appearances. Spokespersons for CRM included CRMP and environment officials, coastal mayors, and fisherfolk leaders. Such proactive stance paid off with the ripple effect being witnessed in various radio and TV programs as well as editorial cartoons, columns and special features.

A study is presently being undertaken to assess the role of media in the CRM agenda-setting process, but offhand, such role is perceived to be quite considerable. During the Conference of Coastal Municipalities, print and broadcast exposure alone amounted to more than Php6 million (US\$157,894), which was almost equivalent to the cost of the national conference itself. The day after the President's "State of the Ocean Address", 10 out of 14 newspapers bannered a photo of the President and the US Ambassador sporting "I Love the Ocean" wristbands.

The observance of Philippine Ocean Month generated tremendous print and media publicity, from stories on CRMP-supported enterprise development projects to multi-media interviews on CRM issues. Through CRMP's initiative, a discussion on marine and coastal issues was included in the President's nationwide radio and TV program, "JEEP ni ERAP". The presence of the CRMP IEC Advisor in the panel of interviewees allowed for the ventilation of CRM issues and paved the way for the President to share his views on the need for integrated and concerted efforts to arrest coastal environmental degradation. Since then, Presidential pronouncements as noted in the media have largely related environmental protection to sustainable food supply.

"JEEP NI ERAP" is the equivalent of a Presidential Press Conference and is closely monitored by national and foreign media, legislators, cabinet secretaries and policy makers.

**3) Adaptation of CRM Messages to "hit the gut" of targeted audiences.** To get the attention of policy-makers and decision-makers, one must look for an appropriate if not a strategic opportunity to frame proposed messages against existing agenda.



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**The point to be made is that efforts to redirect policy makers' attention are fraught with difficulties. Not only are policy makers already over-burdened, they are also pressured to keep their agenda relatively unchanged. Regardless of the merits of an issue – such as wise and sustainable use of coastal resources – few policy makers are naturally inclined to seek new items for their agenda... Issues related to CRM compete with scores of other, more familiar ones that claim both categorical precedence and policy makers' attention. (Tobin, 1992)**

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Two opportunities presented themselves which allowed CRMP to find a niche in its effort to mainstream CRM in the existing national programs of government. One was President Estrada's Food Security and Poverty Eradication Program, and the other, the Omnibus Amendment to the Local Government Code.

The Philippines' Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) of 1997 mandates LGUs to play a central role in delivering frontline agricultural and fisheries services that could help bring about higher productivity and thus achieve food security in the country. The devolution of public resources and support services to local institutions under the management and stewardship of LGUs is an essential part of the strategy towards the country's self-sufficiency and security in food. Again, because AFMA is production-driven rather than resource-management-driven, CRM needed to be put in the context of food security and poverty. Such contextualization opened opportunities for CRM to be affiliated with an existing national agenda. Workshops and consultations on CRM for Food Security, again in partnership with LMP, allowed in-depth discussions and consultations on the issue. A series of information materials woven around the theme "CRM for Food Security" was developed and enjoyed high recall value, with the then Presidential Adviser for Food Security extensively quoting from the publication in his speech at the Conference of Coastal Municipalities.

The issue of poverty in coastal communities also received programmatic attention from the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), which included a campaign

against illegal fishing as one of the 10 priority key result areas of the Estrada administration's poverty eradication program. The NAPC said in a report, "With continued depletion in resources, [illegal fishing] will only lead to more poverty in coastal communities. And, as poverty intensifies, it creates greater pressure to resort to illegal fishing methods" (Morales, 1999). The poverty eradication program, a major component of the Presidential *ERAP para sa Mahirap* (ERAP for the Poor) policy thrust is considered an anchor program of the Estrada administration.

The Omnibus Amendment to the Local Government Code was likewise an opportunity to find a niche for CRM promotion. The idea of including municipal waters in the computation of the country's Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) was first floated by CRMP to fellow donor groups and partner implementation agencies, but it did not get very far. In February this year, CRMP presented the same idea to the LMP, and the mayors, recognizing an advocacy position they could fully endorse, quickly responded. In May, during

provide coastal municipalities the much-needed infusion of external funding for CRM implementation. Such an amendment entails a lengthy legislative process and may take many years to happen. Nevertheless, with the message about the need for additional funding for the management of municipal waters receiving the attention of no less than the Chief Executive, a giant leap has been taken for CRM.

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**Pushing the IRA resolution forward is House Bill 7706 filed by Heherson Alvarez shortly after the Conference of Coastal Municipalities. The Bill seeks to increase the IRA of coastal towns and cities "to enhance the abilities of coastal municipalities to police, preserve and develop their resources". It aims to "get the support of all members of Congress from districts with coastal municipalities to include municipal waters, besides land area, in the formula for computing the IRA." It also seeks to amend Sections 285 and 292 of the country's Local Government Code to allow the inclusion in the IRA formula of additional funds for coastal municipalities.**

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The slogan "I Love the Ocean" is yet another of CRMP's messages that resounded extremely well with the general public. A bumper sticker carrying the slogan has become a much sought-after souvenir item.

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**"It's one of those (bumper) stickers that use the shape of the heart to take place of the word "love" and the heart is done in blue. Simple as the message is, it is a nice way of making a statement for our beleaguered marine environment. Anyone who truly loves the ocean would be expected to express that love in practical ways...." (Villavicencio, 1998). To quote another columnist, "the slogan hits home; after all, who can argue against love." (Logarta, 1998)**

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the Conference of Coastal Municipalities, the mayors included a proposal on additional IRA for coastal municipalities in the resolutions they submitted to the President.

The IRA is the percentage of national government revenues set aside for LGUs. It is computed based on the following formula: population – 50%; land – 25% and equal sharing – 25%. As proposed, the additional IRA for municipal waters would be performance-based and would



Opening of the “Our Seas, Our Life” Exhibit in Davao City with guests led by TV host and former Miss Universe Margie Moran-Florendo.

Two other slogans that seem to have caught on among LGUs and fisherfolk are “Coastal Resource Management for Food Security” and “Municipal Waters for Municipal Fishers”.

**4) Careful “packaging” of CRM as a mainstream, not an “activist”, cause through IEC products and activities that were “mainstream” in look and content.** Because CRM challenges the status quo, it is vulnerable to being “marginalized” as a cause and could easily be viewed or perceived as an “activist” strategy and movement. On the one hand, given the history of political activism in the Philippines, where some elements of distrust at varying levels characterize government-“activist” groups relationship, such perception would be a major deterrent to promoting CRM in the national agenda. On the other hand, while CRMP is a Philippine government initiative, it did not want to be perceived as just another bureaucracy-oriented project.

The staging of the “Our Seas, Our Life” exhibit in the country’s premier shopping malls and public markets in observance of the International Year of the Ocean and the Philippine Centennial illustrates this careful “packaging” of the CRM image. CRM messages were presented in visually arresting and compelling exhibit formats that drove home the point of the severity and urgency of the country’s coastal problems. Such treatment of CRM issues extended to the Project’s print, radio/TV and video products. High production and content values were consistently observed, resulting in several media industry awards and citations for the Project. The awards have contributed to CRMP’s reputation among government, private sector and donor

organizations as *the* source of “state of the art” information on CRM (USAID Mid-Term Evaluation Report, 1999). A good number of business sector support for IEC activities also resulted from the high level of quality of CRMP’s information materials.

The “I Love the Ocean” Movement, billed as “the movement for sustainable seas,” is another strategic attempt to mainstream the CRM cause. Conceived as a community mobilization vehicle, the movement draws membership from all walks of life of Philippine society, and serves as a pool of volunteers for CRM public education and advocacy efforts.

**5) A shared “set of beliefs” at work with the “I Love the Ocean” Movement.** Common themes, such as the need for Filipinos to reconnect with their rich maritime heritage and archipelagic way of life, were used to create emotional appeal among exhibit viewers and the general public. Such themes struck a responsive chord, drawing people to the ocean’s cause through the “I Love the Ocean” Movement. Housewives, business people, doctors, nurses, policemen, students, factory workers, recreational divers, radio broadcasters, teachers, mass media practitioners, priests, nuns, movie stars, artists, whole families and many others you would not ordinarily expect to be advocates came out through voluntary membership (for a fee of Php50 or US\$1.25) to support the cause. Even with minimum work done on recruitment, membership is now close to 13,000. Requests for information materials and exhibits have been received not just from environmentalists but from such diverse groups as medical students, physical therapists, search and rescue groups, fire marshals associations, parish councils and many others.



**On their own and expecting nothing more than the satisfaction of knowing that they are contributing to the cause of marine environmental protection, “I Love the Ocean” members ranging in age from 3 years old to 75 years old initiate coastal cleanup activities, educational “coastal treks”, sea camps, information drives and other ocean-oriented activities, committing time and resources to spread the word that the ocean is everyone’s concern and that everybody can be part of the solution to the problems that threaten its sustainability.**



**6) Conduct of strategic IEC activities that creatively integrate the four development communication approaches/modes: development support communication, social marketing, community mobilization, and institutionalization/advocacy.** The rationale for this approach is to achieve multiple objectives through the staging of single, high-impact activities that would at the same time effect media mileage and draw private and public sector support. IEC activities conducted were deliberately planned to have strong media drawing power and public participation. The “Our Seas, Our Life” Exhibit is one example of these activities. It was staged by the Project in observance of the International Year of the Ocean in premier shopping malls and public markets in six urban centers around the Philippines. The exhibit was, to quote a media observer, “world class”. It received the official endorsement of the Secretary of Education as a school “field trip” activity and drew close to 1.4 million people, including students from more than 400 schools. To drum up interest in the exhibit, CRMP, supported by various groups, staged a number of corollary IEC events, including parades, lecture series, “Save the Ocean” contests, site visits for government officials, and media invitational tours. These events also served as occasions to invite political and movie/TV personalities, who willingly added their celebrity clout and status to the many voices already advocating the ocean’s cause.

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**CRMP’s integrated use of IEC approaches to observe the International Year of the Ocean in the Philippines and the Philippine Centennial won a much coveted Anvil Award of Merit from the Public Relations Society of the Philippines. The Award, which is considered as the “Oscars” of Philippine Public Relations, cited the Project “for its sustained and unique year-long package of special events and public education activities that helped increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of our maritime heritage and the rich but delicate ecosystems that are the lifeblood of millions of Filipinos.”**

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The Conference of Coastal Municipalities of the Philippines was conducted in the same context, that is, efforts were taken to ensure the activity would achieve multiple IEC objectives.

**7) Presidential Proclamation Declaring May and every May thereafter as the Month of the Ocean in the Philippines.** A brainchild of CRMP, the declaration was envisioned to continue the public education and community mobilization gains generated by the International Year of the Ocean. Lobbying for its approval was undertaken by CRMP through the Presidential Assistant for Poverty Alleviation. In November 1998, during the LMP National Convention, President Estrada announced his intention to issue the declaration. He came through with Presidential Proclamation No. 57, which was signed on January 9, 1999.

Such strategic move gave CRMP visibility with the Office of the President. It also opened windows of opportunities for the institutionalization of IEC activities on CRM issues by concerned and partner agencies, as the Proclamation allows government agencies to allocate resources for the observance of the Month of the Ocean.

The Month of the Ocean was observed in the Philippines for the first time this year, helping catalyze Presidential exposure to CRM issues through the “State of the Ocean” address delivered at the Conference of Coastal Municipalities of the Philippines.

**8) Cultivation of alliances and synergy with**



**business and other sectors including church-based groups, professional, civic and environmental organizations, people's organizations, the Philippine Navy, Philippine Coast Guard, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of the Philippines and others to initiate their own IEC activities on CRM.** Even as CRMP maintained an inclusive stance, it deliberately pursued strategic partnerships with groups that required “low maintenance” and had the organizational capability and mindset to promote CRM. At the outset, it was agreed that the fastest way to gain entry to the business sector was via the marketing door, that is, by staging media-oriented events that would primarily promote CRM messages but would also allow sponsoring business corporations and private sector groups to achieve some public visibility and goodwill.

More than 60 companies from diverse industries – hotel, shipping, food and beverage, print and broadcast media, retail, garment, computer, banks, transport, etc. – heeded the Project's request for logistical support in the six cities where the “Our Seas, Our Life” Exhibit was mounted. Notable among these was Banco Filipino Mortgage and Savings Bank, which first got involved in the initial staging of the exhibit and has since embraced the CRM cause by organizing its own information and public awareness campaign, including “on-the-spot” painting, poster, slogan

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One of several “on-the-spot” painting contests organized by the Banco Filipino Mortgage and Savings Bank in support of CRMP's public awareness and social mobilization campaign.

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and comics-making contests, headdress making contests, “ocean quiz bowls” and “Ocean Day parades”. These events drew more than 50,000 participants in the six exhibit sites. Another corporate supporter was Islands Souvenir, a retail and merchandising company which converted its boutique stores to simulate an undersea environment, and developed and marketed a special line of “Save the Ocean” products. A percentage of the sales of these products was donated to the “I Love the Ocean” Movement. The company also paid for local radio-TV air time to promote marine protection and conservation messages.

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***Blue hearts on green sleeves.*** With denim backing provided by Levi-Strauss Philippines, Inc. and scraps of cloth, needles and thread provided by the participants themselves, the Girl Scouts of the Philippines and CRMP worked together on the Blue Tapestry Project, a mobilization activity designed to bring together communities in the making of an end-to-end tapestry or quilt that could serve as a symbol of the diversity of the Philippine seas and the unity and cooperative spirit required to protect this diversity. Close to 5,000 Girl Scouts participated in workshop discussions about the country's maritime heritage and coastal culture, working in groups of up to 10 members to create more than 500 pieces of fabric art depicting their thoughts about the coastal environment. Tied together end to end, these individual works of art make up a single Blue Tapestry that measures more than 1,500 feet, representing the Philippines' 18,000-km coastline. The Blue Tapestry has travelled with the “Our Seas, Our Life” exhibit and has become a regular feature at the Girl Scouts of the Philippines' national encampments and family camps.

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**9) Leveraging of project resources and counterpart schemes.** Because IEC activities can be expensive, CRMP sought to leverage its resources with partner organizations in the conduct of these activities. Where possible, the Project solicited contributions in kind for the conduct of such community mobilization projects as the “International






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A "Crown-of-Thorns" Collection Dive held in February 1999 was participated in by 147 divers and supported by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Tourism, Department of Agriculture- Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Philippine Tourism Authority-Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving, Philippine Navy, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary, the City Government of Lapulapu, the Councils of Barangays Agus, Maribago and Marigondon, the Philippine National Red Cross- Cebu Chapter, Emergency Rescue Unit Foundation, Philippine Fast Ferry Corporation, beach resorts, and numerous dive shops.

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Coastal Clean-up", "Crown-of-Thorns" Collection Dive, Celebrity Dive and even its experimental sea camp and leadership training modules. These contributions ranged from free hotel accommodations for guests, airline tickets, transportation support, promotional materials such as banners, T-shirts and caps, or packed lunches and meals. Some business corporations also sponsored radio and TV "infomercials" in support of the observance of the International Year of the Ocean and Month of the Ocean.

Partnerships via joint production efforts were undertaken with both government and private media companies. CRMP's partnership with the ABS-CBN Foundation resulted in the airing of broadcast features and TV plugs during the prime-time showing of the country's highest rating programs. Such broadcasts were highly cost-effective – CRMP assumed only a part of production costs, as the Foundation's production staff provided the creative services, and the network, the air time.

Among the successful joint ventures initiated with ABS-CBN were the six 30-minute episodes for the educational TV series, "Sine'skwela", which is mandated for school viewing by the Department of Education, reaching approximately 5 million school-children; episodes on the winning Best CRM municipalities; guest appearances in high-rating radio talk shows; two TV plugs as well as two radio spot announcements aired daily for two months in observance of Ocean Month and Environment Month. Free air time donated by the network amounted to approximately Php10 million (US\$265,000), while CRMP's contribution to these productions was only about US\$20,000.

Other media partnerships that CRMP pursued were those with the government's Philippine Information Agency (PIA) and Technology and Livelihood Resource Center

(TLRC). Again, through joint production agreements, a series of 30-minute educational episodes on CRM and Marine Sanctuaries were produced and aired. The episodes on CRM were awarded in 1997 as the best educational TV tool by the Public Relations Organization of the Philippines. A separate CRMP-initiated radio drama, "Kapitan Barungoy," was likewise cited by the Philippine association of broadcasters (*Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas*) as best radio drama for the provincial category in 1998.

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**The production of a special episode on fisheries and coastal programs for the President's nationwide radio and TV program "JEEP ni ERAP" was achieved through representations made with the Office of the Press Secretary and the PIA for the Month of the Ocean celebration. In addition, PIA provided live, nationwide radio coverage of the plenary sessions of the Conference of Coastal Municipalities of the Philippines and the President's "State of the Ocean" address. It also jointly produced with CRMP two 30-second TV and radio spots aired several times daily on national TV and radio networks. This partnership proved to be a win-win situation for everyone concerned, as broadcast companies, through a "broadcast order" mandated by the PIA, are able to claim tax deductions in the equivalent amount of air time used in broadcasting the plugs. Such incentives for the private media sector were highly beneficial to the project.**

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A more systematic research evaluation program is now underway within CRMP to assess the impact of the Project's national agenda-setting process from the point of view of the larger public. An independent private research company has been contracted to undertake benchmark and trend studies, which should contribute greatly to a better appreciation of the dynamics of decision-making, and what motivates people to do what they do.

## The Continuing Challenge

The complexity of environmental problems poses tremendous challenges to environmental educators in developing countries who face not only daunting institutional and financial barriers but also the constraints of time. A limitation of time-bound, location-specific projects is the difficulty of achieving the much-needed critical mass and strategic spread for their sustainability. That CRMP was able to achieve some success in projecting CRM to the national agenda can be attributed to the project's flexibility, willingness to innovate and opportunistic attitude. Some projects may not be as lucky, given the realistic constraints of bureaucracy and the donor organizations' perspectives and objectives.

It is unfortunate that the agenda-setting process is usually looked at with great skepticism, with IEC-related activities being dismissed as mere "public relations tools" that projects can do without. Such attitude is largely dictated by a project's or the institutions' limited budget and personnel as well as a lack of appreciation for how important a favorable social and political milieu is in getting things done. In fact, however, there are ways by which IEC activities can be undertaken at reasonable costs. Going by the CRMP experience in the Philippines, it does not take a budget of tremendous proportions (although a big budget certainly helps!) to cultivate the beginnings of a social transformation, if the project is willing to enter strategic partnerships, build alliances and adopt a flexible and opportunistic attitude.

Despite its success, CRMP faces a continuing challenge. Even when the "translation from condition to problem" has clearly occurred, there is little urgency to do something about the problems, because people are still able to live with the consequences (Tobin, 1992). The so-called "right social message" that would make people turn over a new leaf remains elusive on a larger scale. We may need to consider



other models of successful social movements and learn how to unify people for a cause greater than ourselves. Indeed, we may really need a higher order of IEC interventions to accelerate the process of social transformation.

Perhaps we could learn a thing or two from religious movements. If we are to work as one in solving environmental problems, certain factors and strategies must be identified in order to strengthen environmental literacy

with the corresponding environmental ethics. The great religions of the world have unified various peoples with diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds. We may need to turn to the world's greatest social movements for more guidance in our environmental education work. To change people's attitude and behavior, we could perhaps use some element of "evangelism" in carrying out our environmental IEC mission.

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